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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Turkey, Syria/Spain,
Syria/Brazil, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories (8/23)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers today reported the visit to Damascus of Turkish Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul and his meeting with President Asad, that focused on bilateral relations, developments in Iraq and the Palestinian territories, the Israeli aggression against Lebanon and its repercussions in the region, and the role that Turkey might play in the enhanced United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon [UNIFIL] and in the achievement of peace in the region. Gul also met with Vice President Shara, who underscored the important role that Turkey can play in current issues and in the available opportunities for peace in the region, and with Foreign Minister Mouallem, with whom he discussed the situation in Lebanon following the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1701, the need to maintain the cease-fire and to achieve an Israeli withdrawal to beyond the Blue Line, and the role of UNIFIL. FM Gul made a press statement in which he described his talks with Syrian officials as "fruitful, useful, and very positive." On the possibility of his country's participation in the international force that will be sent to Lebanon to reinforce UNIFIL, Gul said Turkey has not yet made a decision. If Turkey decides to participate, he said, Syria will welcome the decision.

Papers also featured an interview, published by French newspaper Sud West, with Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, in which he stressed the need to involve Syria in international efforts to heal the situation in the Middle East. "There is no military solution for this issue," Moratinos said. The Spanish minister confirmed that Europe cannot stand with its hands folded regarding the fighting 'taking place at its doors' and said that his country will participate in the UNIFIL forces in Lebanon, without specifying the nature or size of such participation.

Papers also reported that Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal al-Meqdad discussed the situation in the region, recent developments in the occupied Palestinian territories, and repercussions of the Israeli aggression on Lebanon with Afonso Celso de Ouro Preto, the Brazilian special envoy to the Middle East. During the meeting, the Brazilian envoy underlined his country's interest in Syria's views regarding current events in the Middle East, stressing the deep-rooted ties that connect Syria and Brazil.

Papers also reported a message of solidarity to the Palestinian people from Mahmoud al-Abraish, Speaker of the People's Assembly, characterizing as an obvious violation of international law and conventions the arrest of Aziz al-Doik, Chairman of the

Palestinian Legislative Council, and other Palestinian ministers, parliamentarians and citizens. Al-Abrash underlined Syria's firm support for the Palestinian people's struggle to restore their usurped rights. Al-Abrash noted that the Palestinians' struggle to liberate their land and establish a sovereign Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital is a legitimate right recognized by all international resolutions. "The great victory realized by the Lebanese Resistance became a good lesson on how to restore all occupied Arab lands," he added.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad reviews with Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul repercussions of the Israeli aggression against Lebanon, latest developments in the region and means to enhance bilateral relations. Vice President Shara and Foreign Minister Mouallem confer with Gul. Viewpoints were identical on the issues" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/23)

"Speaker of the Syrian People's Assembly sends a message of solidarity to the Palestinian people on the Day of Solidarity with Palestinian Detainees: Resistance is a legal right as long as there is occupation" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/23)

"Moratinos: It is important to include Syria in international efforts that aim to heal the situation in the Middle East" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/23)

"Foreign Minister Bilal receives the Brazilian envoy to the region and Khaled Haddadah Secretary General of the Lebanese Communist Party: Syria will support Lebanon.... Coherence among Lebanese factions enhances the Resistance's victory" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/23)

"Defeat intensifies pressure on the Israeli aggression tripartite: Olmert, Beratz and Halouts. Italy, which is nominated to lead the international forces in Lebanon, hints at not sending any forces to Lebanon if Israel keeps violating the cease-fire" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/23)

"Lebanese President warns against an ambiguous truce and continuous Israeli violations of the cease-fire" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 8/23)

"Hanieh advises renunciation of Palestinian domestic differences. Israeli occupation kills three Palestinian activists, disfiguring their bodies, and charges al-Doik with terrorism" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/23)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Launching Peace"

Abd-al-Fattah al-Awad, Chief Editor of government-owned Al-Thawra, commented (8/23): "Arabs launch peace while Israel always launches war. Perhaps the death of the peace process, as the Arab foreign ministers have recently been announcing, poses a question about the relationship between resistance and peace.

"Syria does not believe in 'resistance for the sake of resistance.' The realistic and practical principle is 'resistance for the sake of peace.' Among other achievements, resistance improves the climate for the creation of a just peace. The advocates and supporters of peace, therefore, should always support the concept of resistance....

"Offering peace initiatives and raising peace slogans without engaging in resistance made Israel arrogant and intransigent. Israel did not take those Arab peace initiatives seriously. Every time the Arabs took a step toward peace, the Israelis took steps toward war.

"Many examples prove this, and the violations of Resolution 1701 will not be the last. There is much evidence that many were victimized by excessive optimism about Israel's inclinations, which are supported by the US....

"While Syria is now listening to various views about the next scenarios, it realizes quite well that the possibility of achieving peace depends on Israel's readiness to restore Arab rights. This simply means that the peace process is possible on the basis of the Security Council resolutions....

"Israel showed that it is not willing to achieve peace. Its governments do not believe in the need to return the occupied territories to their owners.... Syria has always believed in peace. It was Israel that aborted every attempt to make a breakthrough....

"The international community is to blame for neglecting the peace process. Instead of talking about incomplete efforts in this respect, the time has come for the world to work seriously to achieve a genuine and comprehensive peace that returns rights to their owners.

"At any rate, the victory of the Lebanese resistance and the success of the resistance in Palestine and Iraq will generalize the resistance approach. The lessons of the past have proven that the exclusion of the resistance option harmed peace. The current lesson says: The victory of the principle of resistance is the way towards peace...."

"A Strange Contradiction"

Omar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (8/23): "All indications show that Israel is playing on the time factor and on Resolution 1701 to make gains that it failed to achieve during its terrorist aggression against Lebanon because of the valor of the Resistance and the steadfastness of the majority of the Lebanese....

"Israel continues its violations of Resolution 1701 through its extensive flights in Lebanese skies and infiltrations into Lebanese areas in the south.... The United Nations is not condemning these violations because they are committed in collusion with the United States, which drafted the Security Council resolution in an ambiguous way so as to be a source of problems, not solutions.

"The strange contradiction is that the dispute among some Lebanese groups has become part of the US-Israeli distribution of political roles for the post-aggression stage. Some are frightening the Lebanese people away from the Resistance and inciting them against Hezbollah, ignoring Israeli massacres and Lebanese bloodshed....

"Those who are in a hurry to create sedition and fabricate problems with the Resistance intend to serve Israel and give it what it has failed to achieve through its sinful aggression.... The worst that can happen in Lebanon -- and that is what the Israeli enemy seeks to achieve -- is to create a split over the national Resistance, which has secured victory for all the Lebanese."

"Violating the Text of the US Drama"

Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (8/23): "What the March 14 group did in Lebanon before, during, and after the Israeli aggression against Lebanon stemmed not from political recklessness but from the role it was assigned to play in an Israeli-American drama....

"The Lebanese Resistance managed to foil the new Middle East plan and to remove the mask from the yellow faces in Quraytim, Al-Mukhtarah, and Al-Arz [headquarters of Saad Al-Hariri, Walid Junblatt, and Samir Ja'ja, respectively]. The owners of those faces, which became more yellow with the victory of the Resistance, found nothing to do other than attack the master of the Resistance [Hasan Nasrallah], Syria, and Arabism. They began to speak on behalf of Israel and demand accountability and the 'immediate' dismantling of Hezbollah's weapons.

"Do they recall that the departure of the Palestinian weapon after the Israeli incursion into Lebanon in 1982 resulted in the Sabra and Shatila massacre? Do they want to see another Sabra and Shatila? When they ask the Resistance to lay down its arms, who will protect the Resistance, and who will protect Lebanon?

"The irony is that this is the first time in history that the winner is asked to lay down its arms by the Lebanese forces that should have defended those who defended them and protected Lebanon. But the role of this group is to liquidate the Resistance and throw Lebanon into the lap of a new May 17 agreement."

"Post-Victory Surprises"

Ali Qasim, a columnist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (8/23): "The Lebanese Resistance was not content with the major surprises it achieved in confronting the Israeli aggression and with scoring a broad victory; it continued its series of surprises even after the victory, when it began work to reconstruct the south....

"The Resistance, through its performance, adds a political credibility to its military and media credibility.... Thus, the Resistance offers a model for political action at a time when Israel is offering a model for political contradiction reflecting clear panic...."

Corbin